

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Children's Commissioner's 2010/2011 Annual Report

The NT Children's Commissioner, Dr Howard Bath, is pleased to report the release of the 2010/2011 Annual Report. The report provides an overview of the performance of the statutory functions and activities conducted by the Office of the Children's Commissioner.

In 2010/2011, the NT Children's Commissioner investigated 42 complaints involving 18 protected children. The complaints covered a range of issues from initial intake of child harm notifications through to child protection investigations, the quality of service responses and care plans for children in care. A number of complaints were also referred to other suitable bodies under the provisions of the Act.

From 1 July 2011, the NT Children's Commissioner is able to receive complaints about vulnerable children, which include those who are involved with the Youth Justice System, Mental Health and Disability services. Dr Bath said: "It is anticipated that our office will receive a substantially increased number of complaints because of these broader functions."

The Commissioner has continued monitoring the recommendations from the 'Little Children are Sacred Report'. Although most recommendations have now been addressed (36 of the 55 being monitored have been fully or substantially achieved), for the first time some achievement measures received lower ratings than they had in previous reports.

The Commissioner also monitors the administration of the child protection legislation and some positive data trends are evident. In particular, there is clear evidence of an increased number of child protection investigations being undertaken, which has resulted in more substantiations of harm. This may be a result of additional workers coming into the system. Of some concern, the level of repeat substantiations (within a 12-month period) remains at an unacceptably high level.

Two practice reviews were conducted. The **Care Plan** review indicated a slight improvement on legislative compliance from the previous year, though it still showed that less than half of the care plans were compliant with legislation and policy. The review of **Temporary Placement Arrangements** taken out in 2010/2011 revealed that a substantial portion of the children were not returned to their parents at the completion of the Temporary Placement Arrangement. This is contrary to the intention of these arrangements. These findings are currently being discussed with the Department of Children and Families to ensure improved outcomes for children in care.

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**Annual Report is located at <http://www.childrenscommissioner.nt.gov.au/publications.html>**

